

Press Release



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Volunteer Group honored by State Parks Department

The Fort Ransom Sodbusters Association is the recipient of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department's Cal Renner Award of Excellence. The award was presented to the group by Doug Prchal, director of the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, during last weekend's Sodbusters Days at Fort Ransom State Park.

The Cal Renner Award is the department's highest honor and recognizes individuals or groups whose long-term commitment to excellence has furthered the mission of the department, and benefited the state of North Dakota and their local community.

The non-profit Fort Ransom Sodbusters Association, established in 1983, began as the sponsor of a simple weekend demonstration for local pioneer farm enthusiasts at Fort Ransom State Park in southeastern North Dakota. Since that time, the group's Sodbuster Days celebration has grown into a regional tourism attraction, attracting an estimated 3,000 visitors to the park during each event, and garnering feature articles in national publications such as *National Geographic Traveler* and *Midwest Living*.

In addition to hosting two Sodbuster Days weekends each summer, volunteer members of the group have donated thousands of hours building, repairing and maintaining farm buildings and exhibits at the park's farm site; and promoting the park at travel shows as part of their efforts to bring visitors to Fort Ransom State Park.

In its nomination, a department employee wrote that "as Sodbusters has evolved, the Sheyenne River valley near Fort Ransom, the community of Fort Ransom and Fort Ransom State Park have experienced growth and success... they have contributed much to the local citizens' quality of life, and set an example of how success can be attained through hard working volunteers."